



Indigenous Seasons

Year level 5

Curriculum Links

History

- Identify points of view in the past and present (Yr 5, ACHHS104)
- Use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written) and digital technologies (Yr 5, ACHHS106)

Cross-Curriculum Priorities

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- Sustainability

Resources

- Students' Seasonal Cycles from the Seasons and Cycles lesson
- Computers or devices with internet access
- Resources relating to Indigenous seasons in your area. A few links are provided at the end of this unit, listed by state, but of course this is a complex subject and local people are far better resources than the web.

Location

The classroom

Duration:
45 minutes

Teachers' note



If you can invite a member of a local Indigenous community to speak to your class about the seasons, this lesson will be much stronger and more relevant. Online resources are provided where this isn't feasible.

Seasons 'from here'

- Discuss the two meanings of the word 'indigenous' – one of which is 'grew here' or 'from this place', and the other refers to the original people of this place, their cultures and knowledge of the land.
- Indigenous seasons can be said to have both meanings: they come directly from the land and climate of each place, and they have been articulated and defined by Indigenous peoples.
- The many different Indigenous cultures of Australia divide the year in a variety of ways, relating to the cycles in local food sources and the cycles in their environment.
- For example, there are three seasons to the Mirriwoong people of the Northern Territory, and six to the members of the Brambuk culture of western Victoria. How many seasons depends on who you ask.
- Ask students whether a year with seven seasons is longer than a year with four. (The length of a year is defined by the planets, but the length of seasons is defined by people.)

Exploring Indigenous seasons

- Individually or in groups, explore the Indigenous Weather Knowledge website at the Bureau of Meteorology: www.bom.gov.au/iwk. This site provides details about the seasons as recognised and described by nine different Indigenous cultures in Australia.
- If you can use local data or are able to welcome guests from a local Indigenous group, this will be a much stronger and more authentic discussion.
- Students' seasonal cycles are an excellent way to begin conversations about what happens throughout the seasons in nature and in our gardens.
- What knowledge can be added to students' experiences of the garden? For example, students may know that certain birds visit the garden but a local visitor may be able to elaborate when and why they come (for example, the currawongs are vocal in spring, the pardalotes nest in August, the Pacific koel comes before the rains).
- Students modify their seasonal cycles to add as many items or rings as they need to reflect what they have learnt about the Indigenous seasonal cycle in their area.

LEGEND:



☀ Summer solstice (midsummer)

❄ Winter solstice (midwinter)

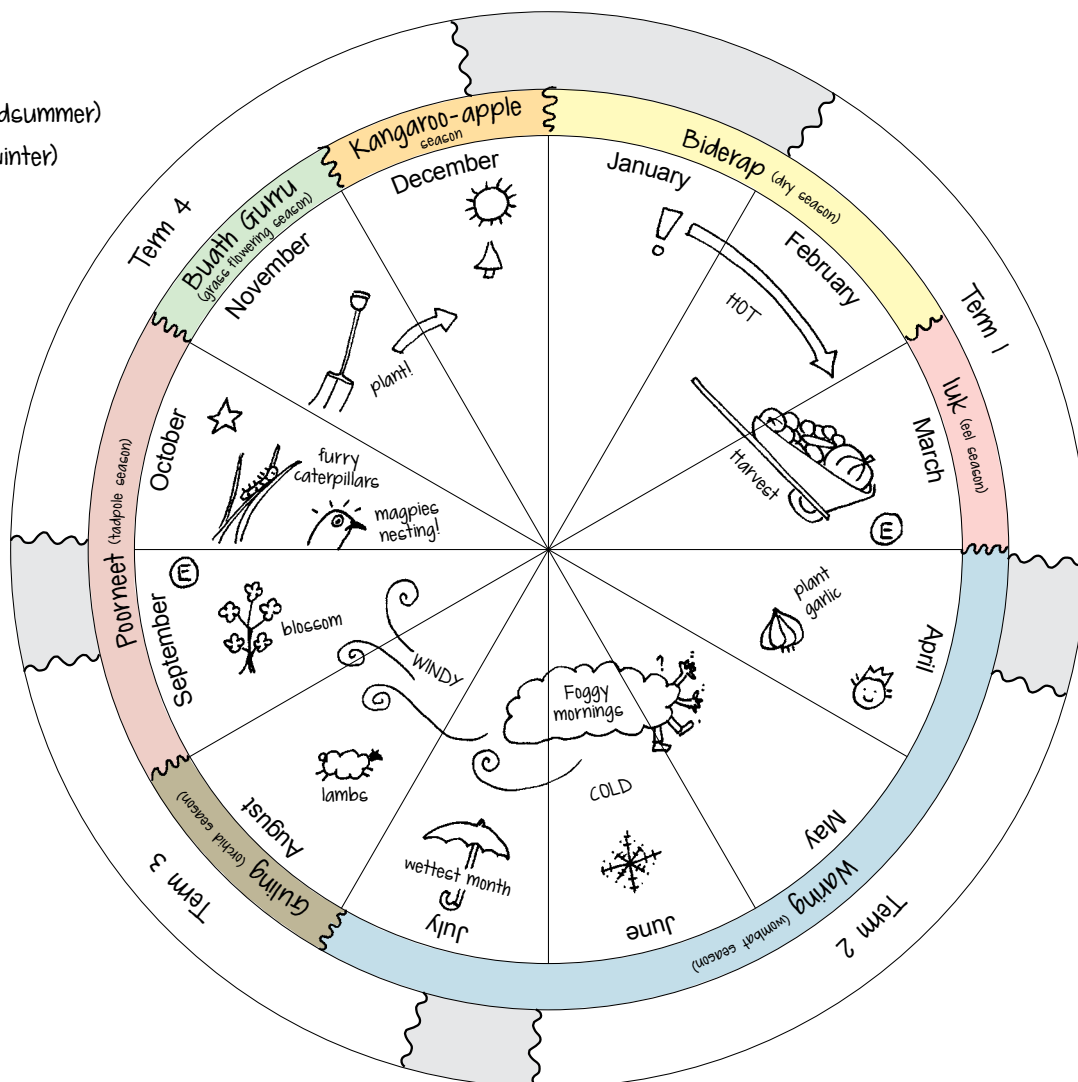
ⓔ Equinox

! Fire season

👤 My sister's birthday

★ My birthday

🎄 Christmas



Going further

- Later you could provide students time to create a final copy from their first drafts; some students make their seasonal cycles quite complex and detailed!
- Encourage students to take their cycles home and ask family and community members for input into seasonal observations. Each student's cycle will be different.
- Students could make large copies of their own seasonal cycles as desk mats.
- Students' independent seasonal cycles can be developed into personal statements of their identity and heritage.

Extensions/Variations

- A large version of a class seasonal cycle can be created on the ground in the garden or other outdoor space. This could be formed from sticks and dried leaves, stones or sand, with items such as seed pods placed as symbols to represent items the students discuss.
- An advantage of a large-scale cycle is that the community can be invited to come and view, sit within and move or modify the cycle as they tell stories. This can be a way to empower the oral traditions that relate to seasonal cycles in our community.
- The cycles can inspire temporary or permanent artwork for the garden space or elsewhere in the school.